

PRACTISE WITHOUT STOPPING

Venerable Luang Por Pieg





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by Venerable Luang Por Pieg

at Wat Fakram (4 march 2001), Pathum Thani, Thailand.

Advice to Monks, Novices and Pakows before the Dtao-Dum
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“It is the spirit of dana, freely offered generosity, which has kept the entire Buddhist tradition alive for more than 2,500 years.”

Sabbadānam dhammadānam jīnāti

‘The gift of Dhamma excels all gifts’

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The Abbot

Wat Fakram (Cittabhavanaram)

Lamlukkah

Pathum Thani

Thailand

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Practise without Stopping

Welcome everybody of the group from Wat Pah Nanachat. You have come here under the leadership of Ajahn Jayasaro, on the way into seclusion to Dtow-Dum, in order to hide away from anything that could become a distraction in the practise of developing your mind. Although Dtow-Dum is a peaceful place, still, in the beginning, for some of you monks, novices and pakows it might bring about quite some excitement to go living out in the djungle for the first time. Sometimes, when you are in solitude alone at night, or even at daytime you might hear strange noises and become full of fear. You will pick up all kinds of sounds that you would never get to hear when you are living in the city. So whenever strange sounds come to your ears, dont be afraid. When you put up your glot, check out the area before, especially if you put it directly on the ground. There might be ants, termites or snake-holes, so be careful and maybe ask the novices to clear the ground a little bit. Also watch out above the space where you put up your glot, whether there are dead branches that might fall from the tree under the shade of which you'd like to camp. When the night comes and it gets windy, your glots might get hit, become damaged or break down. When it is still daytime, have a good look around in all directions and take note of all the trees and bushes. Although during the day they certainly dont look very frightening, once the night comes and you are alone, sitting quietly, hearing the sound of the wind and seeing the movement of the trees, you might start seeing ghosts. I know of some tudong-monks, who hadn't checked out the surrounding trees and bushes, and then in the night, they saw the branches swaying and wondered who it was, that was coming towards them in the middle of the night. Or sometimes there might be cries of animals at night. You may have heard before that there are tigers and bears around, so if your hearts are not strong, it is better to stay in your glot. You don't need to be afraid, just keep up Buddho, Buddho all the time. No need to fear. If we are practicing, these kinds of

animals are of no danger to us. Suppose they come very close, they can pick up with some special sense that we aren't threatening them. All of us are conditioned to fear dangerous animals as snakes, tigers, bears or elephants. We are afraid of them, they are afraid of us. So eventually all are afraid. That's why we need to rely on the Dhamma, the teaching of the Buddha. The Dhamma becomes the only weapon we can use, especially the sending out of metta. We don't have anything else, when there is danger, so we spread metta towards all living beings that might approach us. We are all friends in life, old age, sickness and death. We are all friends in our happiness and suffering, and coming into the forest, we didn't come to disturb anybody. All we want is to do our practice, our training, our meditation. Coming to a place like Dhow-Dum

, we all wish to develop peace. We'd like to practice meditation in order to make our minds peaceful, in accordance with the teaching of the Buddha. We are all still training, and in this sense it is normal, that our minds will go through states that are not 2

peaceful yet. This is why we set out for places of seclusion, where our minds can be at peace more easily. Why we go into retreat is because we want to get away from all kinds of business, chaos and turmoil that we are used to when living in the city or even our monastery. There is something inside us telling us that we should search for a place somewhere that is peaceful and secluded a place where we can take time to be on our own. So, when we finally have time to be on our own, we shouldn't look at what others are doing. Only look at yourself, at your own heart. What is your mind like in this period of time, what are you thinking of, what is your strongest fear?

When you are staying in the forest, maybe the food you get isn't as good as it is in the city. Some people might miss the food at Wat Pah Nanachat but keep in mind, that you have gone out for the sake of training, and to be able to bear with some trouble for the body is part of the practice. To face up with physical hardship in some way also helps each one of us to find his own level of balance on behalf of the mind. Maybe, generally we think we have already found where the balance lies, but it is only when we actually face real life situations and see how they affect us, that we can tell whether we already know what is just right or not. For example: food. Generally to say how much is appropriate for each individual is very difficult. There are people with huge, strong bodies that certainly need more food than small, thin people of course this is a fact, but speaking in terms of the practice that Luang Por Chah recommended to us, each and everyone should follow the standard of stopping to eat just five mouthfuls before he is full, and then drink some water instead. This practice will help to find just the right amount of food. Although on days when we plan to do a lot of walking meditation, we should try to eat a little more, so we are strong enough for long hours of walking. On the other side, on days where we think we will be sitting for most of the time, we try to reduce the amount of food a little bit in order to feel light.

Food really plays a role concerning our physical constitution. For some people that say they are always drowsy, this may be partly due to the food they take. Sleepiness, drowsiness or fatigue is one of the obstacles that can prevent us from attaining peaceful states of mind.

Everyone of us should get to know and experience at least an initial state of peace in meditation. You should all deeply implant in your hearts, that the reason for going out into seclusion is the search for peace. This search for peace you

need to do wholeheartedly, not just playing around. If you practice laxly, the efforts put forth won't bring the full results and you won't see the benefits of going into a solitary retreat like this. You'll find that it is just the same as living in the wat. We may think that these practices don't bring results because we have done them before and they have not yet led to peaceful states equanimity or unity of mind. But all things take time.

All of us have good intentions, we are motivated to pursue good aims. In the search for peace and happiness as it is seen in the Buddha-Dhamma there are two aspects: there is the side of studying the transmitted teachings (pariyatti), which we all know well, and there is the side of practice (patibatti), which is on a different level than what is written in the books. Remember how Luang Por Chah used to tell his disciples frequently that, when one reads about anger in a book, the word 'anger' that one reads doesn't give any experience of how the anger that arises in one's heart feels in real life. We have read the word 'love' before, but what is love, when it really arises in our hearts actually like? To which extent do we actually think, suppose and imagine things? This we have to know individually for ourselves. Maybe in the beginning we can't yet stop the thinking mind. We still keep proliferating with these two aspects 3

[the abstract and the applied]. But let us not become disheartened – we can remind ourselves that this process too, is not unchangeable, it is not fixed. It may improve and become easier by itself. Don't be discouraged thinking that you have too little merit or spiritual potential (barami or paramita, wasana). Rather think of the fact that you are still young monks, newcomers to Buddhist Religion, and that the practice takes time.

It takes the right persons and the right maturing factors (barami). The arising of peace is due to many many conditions.

The coming together of s̄ila, sam̄adhi and paññ̄a (virtue, concentration and wisdom) depends on the spiritual potential (barami) both of the past and present. If we do what we can in the present, and make the best of every day, whatever we have done in the past doesn't matter. Whatever we have done that is bad or evil, to whatever extent, if it comes to our minds now, causing us to think that we'd rather not have acted like this in the past, we need to tell ourselves to start anew and that these are things that have already passed, they are over and can't be changed any more.

This new start is our ordination as monks which the krooba-ajahns (the masters of the forest tradition) or the Buddha called our second birth. Our first birth is the birth as a human being, the second birth the becoming a monk. Still we are only monks on the conventional level, not on the ultimate level, the level of liberation. Being a monk in the conventional sense means that the laypeople give us the yellow robes to wear, but still we have kilesas (impurities) in our hearts. This is called monkhood on the conventional level. But monkhood in the ultimate sense is an embodiment of the essence of Buddhism, the penetration to the roots, for which we all need to train and practice. If we have become monks on the ultimate level, it could rightly be said that we have attained to the heart of the Buddhas teachings.

Luang Por Chah always used to stress that the decline of Buddhism these days is due to the fact that all of our training and practice doesn't really penetrate to the heart of the Buddhas teaching. If our practice doesn't really take us

to the innermost teachings of our religion, we don't know it in its actual meaning and keep speaking about it following our own thoughts, understandings and feelings. These are Luang Por's words, not mine. I'm just letting you know what I've heard him say, since I had the chance to be with him. The fact that Buddhism is going down today, it is because of each and everyone of us, who hasn't yet fully put it into practice. But on the other hand, if we haven't taken the practice to the very end and not yet achieved what is to be achieved, we also need to remind ourselves that it takes time.

When feelings of discouragement come up and we are tired and disheartened we might want to give up our efforts, but once we have given up, there is no chance any more to reap the benefits of the practice. So at least keep trying, everyone. Whether we have already attained peaceful states or not doesn't matter. Just keep on meditating, sitting or walking. Peaceful or not – don't care! Try over and over, every day, with all your energy, whether other people see it or not doesn't matter. We don't practice to impress others and show off that we are practicing for attainment. We practice simply because we'd like our minds to get some peace, not for boasting that we are better than others. We haven't ordained in order to identify with becoming the teachers of others or the abbot. This is not the way we think.

I don't know if you were there, at Luang Por Chah's old kuti close to the bot, when he said: "When I ordained, I didn't think of becoming the abbot of a monastery or the teacher of anybody. It was when I was a monk for quite some time, and started to get more and more pansahs (rainy-seasons i.e. years in the robes) that others came and 4

stayed together with me, and started calling me their teacher." So in this area we all should hold ourselves back.

Eventually, when we have been in the robes for a long time, we need to have developed a strong, firm mind. If we haven't developed anything deep down in our hearts, we might just wander off into worldly attitudes rather than staying on the path of Dhamma. So now, when you are still young in pansahs, you still have the chance and the time to put forth a lot of effort. You can look at your teachers, Ajahn Jayasaro for example. or every one of the krooba-ajahns. All of them have sacrificed quite a bit in order to give all of you the chance to practice without difficulties. For example in leading the monastery, your teacher looks after everything that needs to be looked after, he is the one who takes care of everything and arranges everything so you can use it comfortably and at ease. He invites all of you to develop peace and put forth effort in the practice as much as you can. He wants all of you to gain as much peace as possible.

Now, when you set out into the forest, take the chance to compare what your mind is like then to what it is like at Wat Pah Nanachat. Examine whatever your thoughts are, how your practice is going, how much you do, how far it takes you and check yourself whether you are doing as much as possible or to the full extent of your capabilities.

No need to fear wild animals or whatever, no need to fear the mosquitoes or malaria, really. We just do what we can. If you are worried about malaria, try to be under your glot before it gets dark and come out when it's light again. You have a lot of time during the day that you can spend all on your own. There is a lot of private time, so don't go thinking of other things. When you are all by yourself, you can look at your own minds, to see what it is like in certain periods - is it peaceful or agitated or dull and drowsy? Are you thinking something or worried about something? These are all factors that prevent one from attaining peace, so try to cut off these mental states, for example by watching the breath or doing

body-contemplation, or reflecting on a certain topic or verse of Dhamma.

So try to make the time that you are out into retreat fruitful. Whether you are out there or in Nanachat, if you find your efforts don't bring fruits, you need to check, whether your practice still lacks certain aspects, which you should strengthen and develop more. This practice is not something that can be done easily, and it takes time and endurance.

When I lived with Luang Por Chah, he used to say many times, if we want our practice to attain the best, out of twenty-four hours we have to practice twenty. The leftover four hours are the time we should rest, he said. Still this depends on the physical conditions of each individual, we might increase it to five hours or whatever we think suits us, but at least, during the time on retreat, let us determine to sleep only in one go and when we wake up to try to get up and immediately put forth effort.

Practicing like this will build up more strength in our minds. Suppose we are already awake but keep thinking: "...well, it's not yet light anyway, there is no need to hurry ..."

- each morning we will be getting up later and later and our efforts will slacken more and more.

So, at least, as we are all willing to practice and train, let us be determined to really do what we want to do or hope to reach. Don't think that what you are already doing now is all there is to aspire to, or think you won't get as far as you hope, or ask yourself how much you'll be able to get out of the practice. This isn't important. But to do what you are doing is important. If we all keep doing it and doing it steadily, whether it's 5

peaceful or not is not important. What is important is to practice without stopping. If you all practice without giving up, I am absolutely sure that you will all get something out of your practice, whatever it is, I'm sure it will be more than you expected. And the insight on all kinds of levels that will occur will be something that has exclusively arisen in your own minds these are *namadhamma*, non-material phenomena.

These things can't be shared publicly. These things can't be taken out and shown to others. For instance, when your mind enters peace, you won't be able to describe it to your friends, you can't let them witness how the peacefulness was. These are *namadhamma*, they can't be proven to others, as you could with what you have built up in the material world, for example the sala or the temple here. You can always say the sala was built in a certain year and everybody can confirm it. But when you are out there in the jungle, and peacefulness arises in you, you won't be able to let others certify the character of your peacefulness. Although the practice works purely on the level of mental phenomena, it still is something that directly manifests itself in the hearts of each and everyone of us.

Therefore, let all of us who are already well-motivated to continually keep on practicing in line with the teachings of the Buddha, and the teachings of the *krooba-ajahn*..

Especially Luang Por Chah, our guide in the practice, wanted all of us who are part of a steadily increasing number of disciples, to come to the essence of the Buddha's teachings and to be firmly established in it. Bit by bit, every day, our practice will make our hearts more and more stable until finally we are able to fully trust ourselves.

May I offer these reflections to all of you up to this point today, and we can continue now with questions and answers.

Tan Yatiko: Luang Por: what is the biggest obstacle in practice for western monks in your experience ?

Luang Por: Too much thinking. Usually westerners like thinking. If you are able to stop thinking, paññā (wisdom) will develop. This is my opinion.

Tan Ajahn Jayasaro: For somebody who usually thinks too much, which methods are more preferable, the ones that go against the habits of thinking, like watching the breath or focusing on a mantra or the ones that make use of the thinking mind in some way ?

Luang Por: It depends on the time and place and on which method suits one, but if you want to use the thinking mind, try to keep the thoughts within the body or within the realm of Dhamma, then it won't do any harm. But don't let your mind wander out of this field, for example thinking about what this or that person is like or worry about others criticizing you. Thinking about other people is not correct, it is beyond the realm of practice, and it makes our mind go out following its thoughts without end. Try to keep the thinking within your own body or on the side of Dhamma, then there is no problem, even though you keep on thinking.

But if you are able to take up watching the breath, either take some very deep breaths or hold the breath a little from time to time [in order to stop the thinking mind].

I don't know whether you've heard of Luang Por Chah's method in relation to doing walking meditation: when the thinking becomes too much, go up to the end of the walking

path, stop and take in a full lung of breath, and then try a fresh start.

At the times when you start thinking about certain things that you blame yourself for – and some of you mostly think about things like that – then you need to think 6

about some good actions you have done in the past, for example the fact that you became ordained as monks. This is uplifting to the mind. But even so, sometimes, when we think of the past, it can still seem that we have done things that are bad all the time

– Even to ordain as a monk doesn't seem good enough. We don't know how to think positively in order to encourage ourselves. This is not to suggest to force our thoughts away from our bad aspects, but rather to acknowledge both sides of ourselves.

Tan Mettiko: Usually the krooba-ajahns teach that when we practice a lot, our need for sleep gets less. But could it also be that if our practice is to use investigation a lot, that it makes us more tired?

Luang Por: Yes, that's possible. To investigate makes one tired, and one needs a lot of energy – especially when one analyzes the body one uses of energy.

Tan Mettiko: If one is tired after having investigated, should one continue to investigate or have a rest?

Luang Por: You can stop, no need to investigate further, whether it is watching the breath, investigating the body or reflecting on Dhamma. You can stop – no need to investigate further, just as when you have used up all the energy from the rice you have eaten and you can't derive any more from

it, then you need to start eating again, in order to give the body new strength.

It's the same with investigation in your meditation: when the thinking has been exhausted, you have to make a fresh start with new power and focus of mind. If you think you've reached the point where you feel relaxed, go and continue to investigate.

Or you can go ahead to the furthest that you have been before, and then go on reflecting.

Tan Dto: How can we know that our practice is progressing?

Luang Por: Let me put it this way: think of the fact that our livelihood is to gather almsfood and that we use the requisites given to us by the laypeople. Ask yourself, whether your practice is on the side of causing debts or yielding profit. If you are wasting the investment, then the practice isn't progressing, but if you feel it's making plus, then it's getting better.

Tan Dto: Can you give us some advice for going to see the autopsy tomorrow?

Luang Por: Try to be able to remember what you see. If you remember it, then try to recall the memory afterwards. Before, when I came back from seeing autopsies with some other monks, at the meal time here, most of the monks couldn't eat any meat any more (but I was indifferent and continued to eat normally). Some of the monks had to stop eating meat for up to three days, because it looked so much alike to what they had seen at the autopsy. Try to recall these impressions very often. Have a good look and if it happens to be that there is a certain part of the body that you feel particularly interested in or attracted to, think of how they cut it open at the autopsy. For example the head,

the abdomen or the intestines. Suppose you are attracted to the head, think of how unattractive it was when it was cut open. Take your memory to counter your feelings of attraction.

If you don't have much feelings of attraction now, maybe nothing much comes up now, but later, when desire arises you won't have the means to counter it.

This practice is called asubha, (looking at the loathsomeness of the body), looking 7

at what is not beautiful or attractive as opposed to the beautiful. If you don't know how to practice asubha try for example standing in front of the skeletons that most of the wats have, and look at it. Before, in my first pansah at Wat Pah Pong, at midnight or one o'clock in the night, I would go to look at the skeleton in the sala, using my torch to shine on it. There were two skeletons, one male and one female, and when I looked at them in the light of my torch, I would reflect on my feelings towards a certain woman that I found nice, think of her beautiful hair. But here in the light of my torch the beautiful head was just bones, just a skeleton, nothing about it. Her eyes – how lovely! ...but in the light of the torch: how hollow. Couldn't see anything beautiful anymore. What's so attractive about looking into these eyes? I kept on shining my light on the skeleton, staring at it, every night, but I didn't tell anybody. At one a.m.

I'd go. What about the male skeleton? Was there any difference? They were all the same, just bones, man and woman, they are not different at all once the skin and flesh are peeled off. But we usually don't recognize that this is a fact, so we need to rely on training to look at demonstration objects as these skeletons that we have in almost every wat, as tools for practice. The benefit of this practice is that it

alleviates sexual attraction and desire. I put a lot of effort into staring at these skeletons in order to make my mind feel at ease, relying on a strong foundation, not having to fear states of sexual desire taking over my heart. Because, if we have failed to train thinking in this way before, when the objects of our desire actually challenge us, we won't be able to counter them. We don't know what to do to fight them, how to find a way to overcome them.

So, when I thought of how to deal with the whole area of bodily forms, beauty and attraction, luckily enough there were these skeletons at Wat Pah Pong, so I went every night, stared at them until I was able to remember everything. During my first pansah this practice then developed to the point that the hands of every single person that was giving rice into my almsbowl turned into bones, both male and female, old and young.

This was quite an encouragement for me in my practice.

Tan Kevali : When sitting meditation and looking at the parts of the body, should one stay with one part or is it okay to change around, or is it a sign of restlessness, if I move too fast? How do I know how fast to move on? Maybe sit with the hair all the time? Or go to every other part? What do you suggest?

Luang Por: If you have enough strength of mind, you can contemplate the whole of the body, if you are not strong enough, analyze it point by point. If you like to look at the hair, look at the hair, or take the body hair nails, teeth and skin and analyze each part by itself. Sometimes your energy might not be enough to contemplate the whole of the body, so then take each part separately. If you are tired of looking at the hair for example, you can go on looking at another part. But what's important is that you have enough energy.

We need to know when we contemplate when it is enough for us, that means, when the insight comes up in our mind that now we can really see the unattractiveness, the ugliness of the hair (or nails or skin).

If we withdraw from contemplation and there is no new perception coming up, it means, our energy wasn't sufficient. Then we look at another part. Becoming uninterested with one part, we go to another. If we have enough energy, though, it is okay to contemplate the whole of the body. If not, we need to contemplate part after part.

Tan Kevali : Is it a good thing to do this together with the breath?

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Luang Por: No, it's not appropriate to do it at the same time, Do each practice seperately, this will be more fruitful.

Tan Moshe: What shall we do, if we practice anapanasati together with "Buddho", and after some time "Buddho" disappears ?

Luang Por: If "Buddho" fades away, keep meditating. When "Buddho" disappears, look at where it disappears. You don't need to think any more, simply keep watching.

If you start thinking, peace of mind won't be able to arise. It is right at this point

[where the word fades away], that peace is just about to develop. Be aware and look at this point. No need to worry. If the breath disappears, it doesn't matter. Carefully observe. If you haven't reached this point yet, then there will still be the sensation of the breath. Then look at the breath. If the breath is gone, then just look at where it's gone. It goes at

the point it wants to go. Wherever this point is, look at where there is no more breathing, where there is nothing.

What exactly do you want to know? If you tell me how far you've come, I can explain more accurately. Like this, I don't really know what to say, so it's in accordance with the beginning steps. So, when the breath gets lost, is it still there, is it only very soft and refined?

Tan Moshe: It's very soft.

Luang Por: If the breath reappears this means that your mind has become coarse again. It needs to be very gentle and light, then it's going to take you to peacefulness.

If the breath fades away, don't get anxious. Sometimes it is just about to disappear and then we become afraid and quickly re-establish it. This is the reason that the mind doesn't get peaceful. Just let it go naturally. If it disappears – never mind. When you notice that it's disappearing, just let it disappear. No need to worry. Keep up the awareness at this point. If you get excited and return to look at the breath again, you will become unpeaceful again, the same if you take up your meditation-word again.

Just let it all go. Whatever it is like, just continue on a little more, no matter how it is.

Disappearing, okay, disappearing. Or – if the breath doesn't disappear, this too, doesn't matter. Do you understand this? If the breath disappears it means that you are already getting peaceful. I don't think there is anybody who couldn't get his breath back after the meditation. But there is a second kind of disappearance of the breath, that is: losing the breath because you've lost your mindfulness – whereas what we've been talking about is losing the breath while knowing where you're at. Those are two different ways of the

breath disappearing. One is complete absence, because one sits there not knowing anything, completely unaware. The other is the breath is disappearing and we know what's going on. We develop awareness just at that point. Whatever it may feel like, we can't be bothered; but still we have awareness. If we lose the breath not knowing what had happened, we open our eyes and start reestablishing mindfulness again, focusing on the breath, taking a deep, full in-breath, repeating the meditation word "Buddho" again. In this case, there is nothing else we can do but start again, as we know we've lost it already. If we become aware of it, we re-establish mindfulness on the breath. If we feel we are too drowsy we can try to get up and do some walking meditation.

Tan Yatiko: May I ask about how to decide whether our practice is progressing or not again? For us westerners it's been a habit that we've developed to see ourselves in a negative way, and for most of us, to ask ourselves, whether we are worthy or not of 9

the alms-food or the four requisites will increase this negativity. Not a small number of us feel that no matter how much work we do, we don't necessarily feel worthy of the four requisites. But, still, some monks really take it easy, and even though they have quite a bit of weak points in their conduct, they would never doubt.

Luang Por: Okay, I understand, let's put it this way: if you stay within the 227

training rules, that's enough, and you stay in the realms of the monastery rules (the korwat). So if you keep the 227 precepts and don't transgress them, and keep the monastery-regulations, that our teachers have set up – morning and evening chanting, sweeping the monastery-

grounds, for example – if you stay within this range, then that's enough.

You don't need to be concerned about whether your mind is peaceful or not peaceful. Do you understand?

Tan Tithabho: When my breathing is about to become light and refined I usually become excited and the peace is gone.

Luang Por: You don't need to be excited, you don't need to worry, just look what it is like, only that much. Simply know what is happening.

The breath will become lighter and lighter, more refined and softer. The mind feels light, there is a feeling of ease and relaxation without having to think much, up to the point that when one hears sounds, they don't stir up the mind. If the breath is very light the heart feels light and at ease, too. Try being at ease at this phase, relax the mind. When you hear sounds from the outside, it doesn't matter, they won't disturb you in this state, because you are in a relaxed state already.

Tan Tithabho: What about reflecting...?

Luang Por: If you are at the point of being relaxed, let it be. Relax – until you don't know how to go further, then, that's maybe the end, so in that case you should take up investigating the body or some reflection on Dhamma. But at first you need to continue up to the feeling of relaxation until you don't know what to do any further. Then you can take up reflecting on Dhamma. In this way you will use the power of samādhi for the investigation, until you have penetrating, clear insights. They come easier this way than when just sitting normally. You can reflect for example, that you will have to die just like any other person. Of course, this is something that we have thought about before, but we

haven't yet been able to fully take it in or wholeheartedly believe it. But when we come to the point where the mind is at ease before we start reflecting like this, we can fully internalise these truths and enable ourselves to truly believe them. This is what is meant by using on samādhi for the process of attaining insight. Our thoughts are much more powerful then, compared to average normal-life-situations.

Ajahn Jayasaro: This is an old question, but nevertheless: What are the advantages and disadvantages between trying to enter appana-samādhi (jhāna) directly in contrast to investigating before?

Luang Por: Investigation of the body is capable of pulling the mind into appana-samādhi but those people who have powerful samādhi already might only need to put their attention on the arising of the breath, and straight away their mind goes into appana. This is due to practices they have done in past lives. If we cannot rely on old potential like this, we use investigation of the body in order to come to the same point, or any kind of reflection on Dhamma. The mind gradually becomes more peaceful.

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Suppose today it has only reached a certain level of peace, so we continue tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow we can feel how the amount of peace has grown. We will be able to feel this in our hearts. When we have really enter this state of inner rest, there won't be any worries about the outer world any more, for example when we hear sounds. If we withdraw from this kind of samādhi, usually some kind of special feeling remains in our hearts, the energy of samādhi, that can help maintain the state of not being irritable for a while, when somebody else criticizes us, for example.

Ajahn Jayasaro: The krooba-ajahns in our tradition usually practise more walking meditation than sitting meditation. I don't know the reason why.

Luang Por: The reason is – this is just my opinion – that our krooba-ajahns haven't practiced to the full level of peace. They have taken the very end of Luang Por Chah's practice to be the beginning and the beginning to be the end. In fact, Luang Por had already practiced until – to say it directly – to the level of fourth jhāna, when he started to investigate. But later, when he taught, he didn't speak about this. He taught to investigate straight away. This is why some of the monks and Ajahns misunderstood Luang Por, thinking: "Well, it's not really necessary for us to have samādhi – we can investigate straight away." But in fact, Luang Por's mind had already attained peace

– or whatever you may want to call it conventionally – or let's say, he had already attained a solid base of peace. He had come to where one is able to investigate. In this way, his investigation had power, other than that of us – it's on a different level, although we keep assuming: 'I am like him and he is like me', or we reflect: He and me, like all other people we all have to die one day.

But thinking in this way is not bound to go in very deeply. We don't really believe it. Imagine someone thinking these thoughts with the power of samādhi.

This is an example of how I experienced the power of samādhi. I can take a single hair and enlarge it to whatever size, without limit, into the infinite, and then again shrink it as much as possible, smaller than a needle tip, or make it disappear. This is what they call appana. You can enlarge and shrink objects in their size and reflect on them. If you don't have the power of samādhi and you reflect straight

away, you won't be able to see for example the dirtiness of the hair. This idea would only come through the thinking mind. It takes time to develop the power of samādhi but if you have it, it will be of great help to you and enable you to see more clearly. Paññā (wisdom) arises bit by bit, supported by samādhi.

Another example [for the power of samādhi] is that the mind of those krooba-ajahns, that have already entered peace or oneness is able to penetrate and overcome all kinds of obstacles, that may occur in the mind, whether it's the five hindrances, or others. Samādhi has got more power than the hindrances and it can overcome them, whereas normal thinking isn't able to. Our normal thinking has not got enough energy to go beyond, not even enough for dealing with just a single one out of all the five hindrances. Normally our mind can't even go beyond a single hindrance, but if we apply our minds to the stage of single-mindedness, we can leave all five hindrances behind. Having passed them, our mind is free, to put it simply. We can experience freedom that doesn't have to be concerned with any states of mind at all. But still, all this is only samādhi ; not yet paññā – but at least we get to see freedom beyond having to bother with mind-states. Later paññā will arise following up on this.

So, this is my understanding of the practice. It's the way I have practiced – how other people see it, I don't know. In comparison to how I have practiced, I'd say, some 11

krooba-ajahns have misunderstood taking the end for the beginning and the beginning for the end, and that's why when practicing they don't get the fruits the way they thought.

Ajahn Jayasaro: May I summarize what you have said, please: in developing anapanasati (mindfulness of breathing) or whatever other kammatthana (meditation practice), those who have the necessary parami can take this practice straight away up to appana, and when they come out, they start investigating. But those who don't have the parami...

Luang Por: ...those who don't have the parami they have to do things step by step; that means first use investigation in order to reach appana.

Ajahn Jayasaro: ...and then investigate a second time...

Luang Por:... a second or third time. If we are tired of investigation, we can go to looking at the breath, and then again investigate the body. When we are peaceful, we can go ahead investigating. If we can't think of anything more to reflect on and we need to push too much, we have reached the end of our investigation, so then we start anew. We need to practice alternating like this. In this way we gain strength in both methods. Can you remember Luang Por Chah putting it like this: After having sharpened your axe you go take it to cut trees. The cutting of the trees refers to starting to investigate. When the logs are cut you split them and then go and sharpen the axe again. This is his example.

Ajahn Jayasaro: Could it be that for those people that have high parami and can enter appana straight away it is more difficult to bring their minds to develop pañña, in comparison to those who have contemplated before entering appana, as they have already got a lot of guidelines to think along with?

Luang Por: This, one can't really tell. It depends on the wisdom faculty of each individual person. One can't

absolutely tell, who will make the step first and who afterwards. It really depends on the individual wisdom faculty, who arrives first.

Both of them can win over each other – one can't generally decide who is the winner or the loser. If one enters peace quickly but doesn't investigate, one will still be slow, because it's necessary to investigate. When one is peaceful, one should use the power of peace for contemplation, then one progresses quickly. If things become peaceful and one just rests in peace without doing anything, all one gets out of sitting for a whole day is peace. The kilesas haven't been taken out. They have simply been held back by samādhi : The kilesas have been prevented from showing up in the mind, but they haven't been uprooted.

Before Luang Por Chah and the krooba-ajahns in the Ajahn Mun - tradition emphasized the path of samādhi since they were still living in the forest. Luang Por Chah then adapted the teaching anew: "not sure, anicca, not sure, impermanent..." Everything became "not sure", until even the disciples weren't sure any more. Before one is sure about oneself, one can't tell in what way things are unsure. But they kept repeating Luang Por's words.

It is actually a factor of vipassanā (insight), whatever there is exclusively as unstable and unsure. Even peacefulness and unpeacefulness are not stable. Actually this is meant to cut off what makes us like and dislike things. If we haven't yet arrived at the state of peace, we don't even know peace yet. Luang Por himself had already been there.

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In a way Luang Por Chah gave us a shortcut – these are my own words, Luang Por didn't say it in this way – a shortcut

between samatha (tranquility meditation) and vipassanā (insight-meditation). On the one hand somebody may be hooked up with his paññā, thinking on and on, eventually believing his thoughts to be real wisdom, and on the other hand somebody who is in a peaceful state or has strong samādhi might sit samādhi only and miss out on investigating. One is lacking to develop insight, and the other is lacking to develop samādhi. The one who thinks a lot and doesn't know what to do in order to stop his thinking, needs to develop samādhi.

Paññā will come afterwards. The other one who is sitting peacefully in samādhi already, has to go back to investigating the body, and he'll be quicker to know. But all this depends on how we adjust our practice in order to come to the point of it.

Ajahn Jayasaro: Can it be that reflections make the mind agitated?

Luang Por: If after reflecting one becomes too agitated, then one needs to go back and look at the breath again. When one reflects on one thing, on just one issue and the mind becomes too agitated, it means, that one has been thinking of too many different issues. For example, when one investigates the body, one should really stay this body here, with its hair, nails, teeth, skin bones and sinews – whichever objects one may chose – but they should all stay in this body.

The confusion usually comes up when we start wondering, whether the way we reflect is right or not, whether it is really the way the krooba-ajahns taught, whether we are thinking correctly. That's already the start of things falling apart, and it will continue if we don't cut it out straight from the beginning. It will keep on going. "Did the krooba-ajahns

really teach this way... ? Hmm..., is this way of thinking okay? The krooba-ajahns, who have practiced before, did they really do it this way?". At this point things are already getting out of hand; "This monks says to do it like this, this monk says to do it like that." This is how it keeps going around and around without end. Once it started, it never stops. So if you start thinking in many different directions, you need to try to stop it. Focus on the breath again, or think about a certain Dhamma-passage, if you like.

Question: Could you speak about walking meditation please?

Luang Por: When you do walking meditation establish mindfulness at the soles of the feet, and repeat "Bud-dho", "Bud-dho" together with the left or right foot. It doesn't matter which foot, I don't think this has to be determined, whatever you feel suits you. But try to keep to your style - one side "Bud" - the other side "dho", and keep doing this over and over. Try not to go to other things, only keep to "Buddho", even if there is some kind of thinking that comes up in your mind - it doesn't matter, just keep up mindfulness merely knowing "Buddho". If it's the case that you have kept "Buddho", going all along, but eventually you start thinking, and "Buddho" disappears, it means that you have been lacking mindfulness. Then you need to go back and re-establish mindfulness again. Sooner or later your mind won't go astray and the thinking will become less. If you do "Buddho", on and on, and you keep up only

"Buddho", everything else will be gradually cut off by itself.

When you loose "Buddho", it means that the other thoughts you had at that point were very weighty. Then you need to give Buddha more weight and all the other thoughts will

become very light and finally disappear. It all depends on how we think.

It's not that we cut out thinking completely while doing "Buddho". There is still some 13

thinking. Our brain keeps having thoughts of some kind, but we try to have mindfulness with it.

Tan Moshe: When sitting watching the breath and a certain chant that we like comes up in our minds, can we also use this to develop samādhi ?

Luang Por: If you like, you can also repeat a certain chant, but when you do this, please always stay with this particular chant – whatever you like. Passages of chanting are just another form of parikamma (meditation mantra). Anything that makes your mind unified can be used. Some people really like chanting. You can chant the pāṭimokkha (the recitation of the monks rules), that's nice and long. Whatever object of meditation we take up, "Buddho" for example, this becomes the one object we need to look at; but to exchange "Buddho" into a certain chant also works.

Actually, meditation is not difficult – at least that's my opinion, but the problem is, that you don't know the method of doing things. Sometimes, when you are just about to reach peacefulness, you start making it unpeaceful again. This is the crucial point, the reason why peace won't come up. Sometimes you start thinking: "Wow, this really feels good, but, hey, wait a moment, am I really doing things correctly...?" This is where doubt comes into play, where the hindrances arise. You go off thinking something else and make it all unpeaceful again.

If you kept letting things go freely as it is their original course, they would unfold in a natural way. But there is

always a point where everybody starts worrying – me too, I also had doubts, it's not only you. When I came into this phase I went thinking:

"...hmm. Am I really doing things correctly? Did the krooba-ajahns do it this way, does this really lead to peace?" There are all kinds of variations that can be produced by our minds preventing our hearts from becoming peaceful. Try get rid of these mind states.

Try to keep going and stay unconcerned, unhurried and cool. No need to be afraid of not getting to peacefulness. To say it simply, one needs to keep doing the practice anyway, whether it's peaceful or not. One really needs to accept everything. If you keep thinking: "Peaceful or not, I don't care", then you'll get to peace. If you only want the peaceful states, you'll go worrying "...hm – is this really it or not?" Then you're already confused, and your heart is even less peaceful than before. If you were to simply let it go according to it's own logics, it will automatically flow where it naturally inclines to. Don't overdo sitting with your eyes closed. Do everything well-balanced.

In the beginning breathe in very deeply, fully pump all your lungs up with air, then let it all out and relax and start again with another full breath. Then release the air again.

Don't think of anything else then, try to be only in the present. Just that is enough.

As concerns the contents of your brain, just try to take your awareness away from it, keeping it with this object. When there are still thoughts and they don't stop, try to get them to knowing the in- and out-breaths. That's already enough. Everything will develop on it's own. Don't hurry, keep patient, do it continually. Don't rush yourself into wanting

something. If you are impatient and you want to get something, you won't get it.

Keep doing the practice on and on, whether it's peaceful or unpeaceful. This is what Luang Por Chah said: "If it's peaceful, keep practicing, if it's not peaceful, keep practicing. If you're lazy, keep practicing, if you're diligent, keep practicing". When you feel lazy, you don't want to practice. It's only, when you feel energetic that you do it, This is the problem: What to do when one is lazy? This is where it's difficult. When 14

peace arises, everybody wants to practice, but if it's not peaceful, there's nobody that wants to sit meditation. Of course I can understand how you feel. If somebody doesn't get calm, during a two-hour-sit, there will be a thousand issues that he'll be thinking of, whereas, somebody who is peaceful, just sits down and after a while opens his eyes again, saying, he didn't experience anything apart from feeling good all the time. I do understand your problem; the two experiences don't feel the same. They are opposites, but still one needs to bear with what comes. Suppose today you sit meditation and it becomes completely unpeaceful, you think: "Man, I wanted to meditate, but during this whole hour, all I've been doing is thinking. What's the use of all this?" It's not that I haven't had these experiences before, I have also encountered a lot of unpeacefulness.

I know what it's like: sitting for a whole hour thinking here and there, no samādhi at all. Really, I'm not lying, I'm speaking of real experiences, I know how it is. But I always kept patient, improving bit by bit. "No peace - so what - start again. Doesn't matter that there's no peace - give it another try", I was encouraging myself. If the meditation is not peaceful, it doesn't matter. If I just keep doing it on and on there has to be some peace at least one time. Whether it

was really going to become peaceful or not, I didn't know, but nevertheless I kept thinking like this for the time being, in order to give myself encouragement.

This is how I got over unpeaceful times, giving myself the advice that it's all not sure, and that in the future I might come to peace. I was tricking myself like that, many times, over and over. Keeping it up, I gained encouragement and finally became calm.

Surely, this is difficult, but if you keep saying it is difficult, of course then it is difficult.

If you say it is easy, then it is easy. It's really easy. I don't know how to call it – it's all a problem of not developing the point where it is just right. If you have found it though, everything comes down to being well balanced in itself. One can't know really before where the point of just-rightness lies. But if one really does the practice, the right balance will become self-evident. Talking about the middle way is so difficult, because for one person it may be a certain way but for some other person it may be different again. It depends on the individual. Everyone has got to go and find it for himself, one can't tell someone else where the balance lies. Everyone has to try out on his own until he knows. But if you don't do the practice, you won't know. And when you do practice, you also need to practice fully to the limit. You can't just practice without doing wholeheartedly and then go saying: "I've already tried it out and don't seem to get anything out of it", and if somebody else says he does you go arguing with each other without end. Isn't that how it goes? Take somebody who learns easily when studying and passes the exams, whereas another person fails them. The one who fails the exams will complain: "I have studied, but I didn't get it. It was so hard, I nearly died." The one who passed will say: "I didn't find it hard, all the questions were

really easy". So what to say? It's difficult to talk about how people feel about things.

Whatever standard that lies in the middle should do. That means not to force things too much and not let it be too lax. This is enough.

It is not a question of whether or not you will become peaceful. This isn't the problem. The problem is not to give up practicing. Continually keep on practicing, and you will attain peacefulness. But right now, whether you're a monk, novice or layperson, when you don't become peaceful, you don't want to practice. This is exactly what de-roys the peace, what prevents peacefulness from developing. If you're not peaceful, you need to go for it, each and every day. That's it. You really don't need to be worried if it's not calm – it doesn't matter. Tomorrow you can start again, no problem. We can 15

restart over and over, that's how to do it. If you all practice in this way, I believe for sure, that each and every one of you will find peace. Don't give up too early, everyone of you. You are worried that you're not peaceful, that you don't have the barami the krooba-ajahns had, like Luang Poo Mun ... "they have built up huge amounts before –

they really had it easy. All they needed to do was to sit down, and in no time they were already gone beyond, not experiencing anything any more..." If you think like this, you can give up straight away. You might as well stop practicing at once. You have to practice fighting to the last. No peace – never mind. Try to encourage yourselves over and over "...it doesn't matter if it's not peaceful – tomorrow it'll work, it's going to become peaceful..." Keep going on and on, that's the way, fighting relentlessly, unremittingly.

The more you practice the better. Even if you are about to fall asleep, when you're drowsy or agitated – so what! Always bring to your mind that you can begin with a fresh start again and again. You shouldn't give way to moods of happiness and frustration, thinking, "peaceful enough for today, I've had enough" or "it's so unpeaceful, I'd better stop". This won't work. You can't do it that way – you need to carry on.

As I just said, if you don't experience peace when you are meditating you wonder, wouldn't it be better to stop, as you'd only be thinking for the whole hour anyway.

You wanted to sit samādhi but you keep thinking without end. I've gone through all this myself. When you finally open your eyes, you can't even remember all the stuff that you have been thinking of. That's how it goes. But nevertheless you have to keep going for it, you have to resist and endure. If you haven't got it yet, don't worry, just don't stop doing the practice. If you practice without giving up, you will attain to peacefulness. These are not my words, they are the words of Luang Por Chah. Try to give yourselves encouragement. Even if it's not peaceful, encourage yourself over and over. You can trick yourself. Tell yourself, that wherever you go there have to be obstacles, and here, the obstacles are actually only your own thinking. It's not even the case that the obstacles we have to face lie in other people's thinking – it all comes from ourselves. Our thoughts aren't obstacles that other people created. It's our own thinking that isn't right. Right view and wrong view is something entirely personal.

Nobody else can do the understanding for us. We think our thoughts all alone. The krooba-ajahns, our friends and other people, they don't know. Even if we are sitting together they can't know for us. We know individually for ourselves. This is

a point that you need to understand: thinking is entirely personal. Nobody knows for us, only we know ourselves. Sometimes at the meditation time we see some other monk (excuse me – I'm not trying to belittle anyone in particular) sitting there absolutely upright for the whole hour, and we think, "...wow, this monk here, for sure he's got it.", but in fact he has been thinking without end for the whole hour. Sitting with a straight back is no guarantee for peaceful states.

So try out these teachings, all of you. If there are more questions, you can come and ask them step by step. But you need to really give it a go, practice up to the limit.

This is very important: to go as far as you, can, really. Don't just do the practice light-heartedly. If all you do is play around, you won't get to peace, you won't develop wisdom. No wisdom for you. You'll keep getting misled by your kilesas. For example, you think: "I don't see anybody else practice, I seem to be the only one practicing here.

There is nobody else in the wat. I'm the only one really serious about the practice."

Then, after some time you think, "eh, I've always been so strict, if I was to relax a little more in the future, that would be okay, too...". This can lead to be pulling off more and more. You think: "Maybe I don't need to come to the meditation sessions any 16

more." Then you sometimes come, sometimes you don't, and in the end you stay away completely. Eventually, when everybody stays away whenever he likes, monastery-standards (kor wat) are completely gone to the ruin. You need to try to go against the stream, put up with things. "Patience, endurance..." – patience and endurance are the

very qualities that you need in order to allow peace and goodness to develop. Even if you don't see it now, in the future you'll see it for sure. It needs perseverance. At times, when I was new, I also didn't experience anything special, and I also still had wrong views and ideas. When I started practicing in the beginning, when I sat meditation there was nothing but confusion. I even started wondering about the Buddha himself, whether or not he actually became really peaceful when he was meditating. These thoughts I had weren't right; it is wrong view to question, whether or not the Buddha himself was really peaceful when meditating. At this stage of meditation to ask things like that...!

During that time I was in fact practicing a lot. I had only four hours of sleep, and these four hours had become such fixed habits that I could tell when they were over. As soon as the four hours had passed I'd get up and I would press the alarm-clock I had set, before it actually went off. Many times, every night. When one is still struggling, things are confusing, but sooner or later one really ripens, always having resisted and gone against the grain. Finally peace develops and one feels inspired. All one's efforts in the practice might finally have been quite all right, so one tries to continue in the same way, on and on, and it becomes more peaceful all the time. When I was new I tried out what Luang Por Chah said: to light an incense-stick and not to get up until the incense was burnt up. I was sitting there sweating and it wasn't peaceful at all, the sweat was running down in big drops my whole body. I did it a lot, every day.

One day I finally found the right balance, peace arose and when I opened my eyes, I was surprised: since when had the incense gone out? From then on I finally felt encouraged. It meant that the words of the krooba~ajahns weren't all wrong, if we only really followed them sincerely. I thought to

myself, that when we don't actually do what they taught us, it is ourselves that aren't sincere, it's nobody else's fault. It all depends on us. So, then I tried to sit continually trying to overcome myself. When I was tempted to get up, I thought, "I don't care. If I am supposed to die, then – okay

– I'll die. If my leg is to fall off, okay, let it fall off. Let it all go. That's how I thought.

"If my legs die off – so what? Don't care. It doesn't matter – I probably won't die.

...death?! Okay, go ahead, I'll die practicing. That's just what the krooba-ajahns said: if you die while you put forth effort practicing, that's better than dying while doing anything else. Doesn't matter – believe the krooba-ajahns and just go ahead."

I went ahead until I finally found peace, up to the present day. All because I believed the krooba-ajahns.

So for all of you it's exactly the same. It's not different at all. Things as confusion, I know them all, how they feel, how one worries where to go and how to carry on, even spoiling the peace that one already has. I know all this. So all of you need to try and give a little encouragement to yourselves. If it's too much, you'll be overconfident, if it's too little, it won't work.